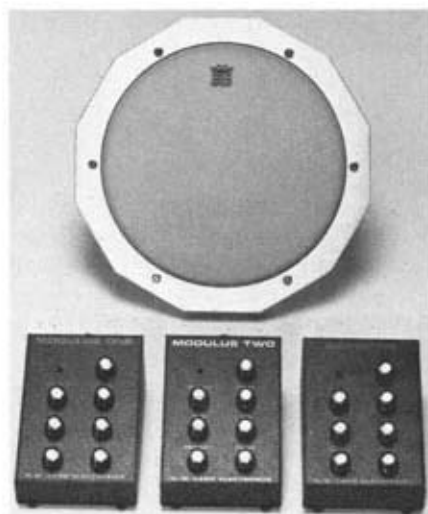


by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.



H.W. Cano is a new company on the electronic percussion scene, based in Colorado. They have recently introduced their line of *Modulus* electronic drums.

The *Modulus* drums are available as a five-piece setup: bass, snare, and three toms. The shells are 1 1/8" deep and appear to be made of aluminum. Cano uses 10" Remo practice pad heads for a genuine, comfortable drum feel. These heads are tensionable with a screwdriver, just like on Remo's own practice pads. However, I cannot find any means for replacing the heads, since the shells are one solid piece.

Each pad mounts on its own snare drum stand, which has double-braced tripod bases and incorporates the traditional basket design. From what I can gather, these stands are from Maxwin's 700 hardware series. They are sturdy and fully adjustable, but do not go high enough for my liking when used to mount the tom-tom pads. Perhaps Cano would consider offering op-

Cano Modulus Electronic Drums

tional concert-height stands for drummers who require more height than a standard snare stand can give.

The bass drum pad mounts vertically on a special metal post which stands separately in the kit. It has a large lip for pedal mounting along with spurs (actually screws) at its sides. The post holder keeps its position very well.

The pads hook into separate modules which are arranged in a console format, housed inside a foam-lined case. *Modulus One* controls the snare drum; the *Modulus Twos* are for the toms and bass drum. The five modules are all linked together with numerous patch cords, allowing the far left module to handle output line and power supply. Mini phono plugs are used to connect each pad into its module. All the pad-connecting cables are tied into a snake for a neater look. The modules each offer the following controls:

On/Decay—Decay time can be set anywhere from 10 milliseconds to 10 seconds. Bend—This gives a downward pitch sweep ranging to two and a half octaves.

Frequency—This controls a five-octave tuning range.

Noise—This controls a relative mix of oscillator-to-white noise. On the *Modulus One*, this control is used to provide the wire snare sound; on the *Modulus Two*, low frequency noise is used for degrees of head rumble, as well as for special effects. Strike—This gives variable head impact sound.

Pan—Allows left/right stereo imagery. There is also a volume control on each module, plus an LED which indicates module-on status. When the corresponding pad is hit, the LED brightens.

Two 1/4" phone plugs supply stereo output. Each module has a sensitivity control, and the modules can trigger from pulse outputs of sequencers, drum machines, click tracks, etc. It is also possible to separate the module outputs for input to a studio mixing console.

The sound of the *Modulus* kit is a cross between *Syndrum* and Simmons, depending on your settings. At high tunings, the toms sound like *Syndrums*, in that they have a clear pitch similar to a keyboard synthesizer. At lower tunings, the sound comes closer to acoustic tom-toms, but it is still obvious that the sound is electronically

reproduced. They're not as punchy as the Simmons, but they are a lot more synthesized. I found a bit of decay "growl" when the sound died away. The bass drum has good punch when set for a flat sound. (It seems that bass drums are always easiest to reproduce.) In order to get good depth, it's best to run the system through good-quality amplification.

I do have complaints with the snare drum sound. After hearing the Simmons and all the current digital and analog machines, the Cano snare reminds me of the sound offered on cheap rhythm boxes. It is very thin sounding and too "rat-a-tatty." They should try different types of oscillation and noise to fatten up the snare sound, since, in its present form, it is *too* synthesized sounding, due to an overabundance of noise generation.

Unlike the Simmons, there are no stored preset sounds; all sounds and tunings must be set up by the player by dialing the different controls. I do like the concept of real drumheads. It felt very natural playing them, and the pads will respond as fast as you can play them.

The entire *Modulus* kit retails at \$2,495, and this includes five pads, five modules, four stands, one bass drum pad post, and all cords, plus a case for the pads and a case for the modules. The system is powered by a nine-volt AC adaptor, which is also included. The pad/module sets are available separately at \$400 each.

Cano is also offering the *Gravitom* module, which is capable of producing synthesizer sound effects a la *Synare* and *Syndrum*: bird calls, gongs, bells, space sounds, etc. It, too, is available at \$400 retail (for pad and controls).

If Cano is shooting for a piece of the Simmons market, they should tweak their sound controllers a bit for a purer, more natural sound. As they stand, the *Modulus* drums are more electronic sounding, and different from the *SDS5*. The construction is good and the basic premise is sound. A few minor changes would make the *Modulus* setup a good addition or even alternative to an acoustic drumkit. A demo is available. For more information write: H.W. Cano Electronics, 7057 Vivian Court, Arvada, CO 80004, 303-425-4010.

